payments and installment payments are also supported by the system. In another embodiment, the

user may make a partial payment upon purchase, and then complete payment when the digital

image(s) are received. Alternatively, the method and apparatus of the present invention may be

employed without a payment feature.

5   While several embodiments of the present invention have been disclosed, it is to be

understood by those skilled in the art that other forms can be adopted, all coming within the spirit

of the invention and scope of the appended claims:

I claim:

1.   An apparatus for facilitating the selection and acquisition of digital images, comprising:

10   a storage device; and

a processor connected to the storage device, the storage device storing a program for controlling the

processor; and

the processor operative with the program to:

receive search criteria regarding the subject matter of digital images from a user;

15   make one or more base digital images satisfying the search criteria available for the user to view;

receive input from the user to select a base digital image;

display a plurality of derivative images corresponding to the base digital image selected by the user;

and

receive input from the user to elect one or more derivative images for acquisition by the user.

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2.   The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the derivative images further comprise a plurality of pre-

modified variations of the selected base digital image

3.   The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the derivative images have been created prior to the user's selection of the base digital image and are stored in the storage device.

5   4.   The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the derivative images further comprise the selected base digital image.

5.   The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising the processor operative with the program to make the elected derivative image available to the user to download.

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6.   The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising the processor operative with the program to:

receive payment information from the user; and

process the payment information to finalize the acquisition of the elected derivative image.

15   7.   The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising the processor operative with the program to:

receive tool input from the user to select a special effects tool; and

allow the user to modify the elected derivative image using the selected special effects tool.

8.   A method for using a computer to facilitate the selection and acquisition of digital images,

20   comprising:

inputting into the computer search criteria regarding the subject matter of digital images;

outputting one or more base digital images which satisfy the search criteria;

inputting into the computer a selection of one or more of the base digital images;

outputting a plurality of derivative images corresponding to the selected base digital image;

inputting into the computer an election of one or more derivative images for acquisition by a user;

and

5   outputting one or more elected derivative images for acquisition by the user.

9.   The method of claim 8 wherein the derivative images have been created prior to the selection

of the base digital image and are stored in a storage device of the computer.

10.   The method of claim 9 wherein the derivative images further comprise the selected base

digital image.

11.   The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

inputting into the computer a selection of a special effects tool; and

utilizing the special effects tool to modify the elected derivative image.

12.   The method of claim 8 wherein the step of outputting one or more elected derivative images

for acquisition by the user further comprises the steps of:

inputting into the computer payment information;

20   outputting payment authorization for the elected derivative image; and

outputting the elected derivative images to the user.

13.   The method of claim 8 wherein the step of outputting a plurality of derivative images

corresponding to the selected base digital image further comprises the steps of:

retrieving the derivative images corresponding the selected base digital image from a storage device

of the computer; and

5   displaying the derivative images upon a video monitor of the computer.

14.   The method of claim 8 wherein the step of outputting one or more base digital images which

satisfy the search criteria further comprises the steps of:

searching a database of base digital images in the computer based on the search criteria;

10   displaying the base digital images which satisfy the search criteria upon a video monitor of the

computer.